

Testimony Before  
The Public Health Committee  
February 21, 2007  
Beverly J. Goulet  
Director  
Department of Human Services  
City of Norwich

Re: Proposed Bill No. 666

LCO No. 2794

AN ACT CONCERNING SAFE RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT FACILITIES FOR  
EFFECTIVE RECOVERY

Good afternoon, my name is Beverly Goulet and I am the Director of Human Services for the City of Norwich. Joining me today is my department's Supervisor of Social Work, Lee-Ann Gomes. Both of us are actively involved on the local, regional, and state level relative to addressing the needs of people in recovery. I am here to testify in favor of proposed Bill No. 666 (An Act Concerning Safe Residential Treatment Facilities for Effective Recovery). Passage of this "Proposed Bill" will insure that state funding used for payment of housing costs for people in recovery will not be allocated to congregate living facilities that are in violation of local zoning requirements and life safety standards. I believe that the State has a responsibility to spend taxpayers' money in a manner that reflects compliance with quality housing standards. Currently, the State is allocating a significant amount of money each month to property owners who house an undetermined amount of people in recovery. The individuals who are housed in these unlicensed, "under the radar," congregate living facilities have typically been recently discharged from inpatient and/or outpatient substance abuse treatment facilities and the majority are physically and emotionally fragile and at high risk for relapse.

Our City Housing Inspectors and Social Workers have witnessed firsthand the unsafe housing conditions people in recovery have been unwillingly subjected to because the State does not have a policy that requires compliance with local zoning regulations as a prerequisite to funding congregate housing costs. To continue to not require state funded congregate living facilities to meet local zoning requirements and life safety standards places both the individuals and community at risk. I believe all other state funded housing programs require compliance with local and state codes, so why is it that sober congregate living facilities do not fall under the same life safety requirements? It is critical that we continue to provide for sober congregate living facilities throughout CT, but in a manner that places no one in harm's way. Please know that I have also submitted testimony on this important matter to the Select Committee On Housing.